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Exposing How Post-Zionists Manipulate History

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No. 100

- The Israeli New Historians have heavily influenced academic teaching about the Arab-Israeli conflict on campuses throughout the world.
- The New Historians disregarded and omitted the two most critical features of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war: the religious-jihadi nature of the Arab campaign and Arab rejection of the UN partition resolution.
- The narrative built by the New Historians changed the parameters of political negotiations: a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel is not meant to correct the 1967 "occupation" and create a framework for a territories-for-peace exchange but to atone for the alleged atrocities of the Nakba (Palestinian catastrophe) of 1948.
- The sharp reversal of his positions by Benny Morris, regarded by many as the dean of the New Historians, must be viewed as a full exposure of the fictitious structure and distorted facts of what was an orchestrated, antihistorical, anti-Zionist endeavor.

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"Historians have tended to ignore or dismiss as so much hot air, the jihadi rhetoric and flourishes that accompanied the two-stage assault on the Yishuv and the constant references in the prevailing Arab discourse to that earlier bout of Islamic battle for the Holy Land, against the Crusaders. This is a mistake. The 1948 War, from the Arabs' perspective, was a war of religion as much as, if not more than, a nationalist war over territory. Put another way, the territory was sacred: its violation by infidels was sufficient grounds for launching a holy war and its conquest or reconquest, a divinely ordained necessity."

Benny Morris, 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War [1]

What happens when historians ignore or dismiss central components of history? In the above statement, Benny Morris provides a very unusual glimpse at the major historians' omission of what was the central feature of the Arab war against Israel in 1947-1948: uncompromising jihad against the Jews. The Arabs never concealed that this was a religious war and they were on record in taking responsibility for it. The Arab Higher Committee representative Jamal Hussein told the UN Security Council on 16 April 1948: "The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight." [2]

Hussein was quoted in the *New York Times* explaining that the Arabs "would never allow a Jewish State to be established in one inch of Palestine," and he issued a clear warning that attempts "to impose any solution contrary to the Arabs' birthright will only lead to trouble and bloodshed and probably to a third World War." [3]

Behind such deadly threats that were delivered to the whole world was the ongoing use in the Arab world of religious incitement against the Jews in public broadcasts and in mosques. Prominent in this regard were the mufti of Jerusalem and main leader of the Arabs in Palestine, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and the religious scholars of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the highest religious authority for Sunni Islam, which issued an official call for a "worldwide jihad" immediately after the UN resolution on the partition plan had passed in November 1947. Religion was central

expeditionary force as it crossed the border in Rafah on 15 May 1948 on its way to fight the newborn state of Israel: "The hour of Jihad has struck.... This is the hour in which...Allah promised paradise." [4]

These two critical and central features of the 1948 Israeli War of Independence – the religious-jihadi nature of the campaign and Arab responsibility for launching the war in rejection of the partition resolution – are very often disregarded or deliberately ignored in the vast amount of literature on the war.

What happened in 1948? This is the core of the debate. Basically the revisionist New Historians sought to challenge what they termed Israel's official historical canon. They rejected the collective memory of Zionism and the state of Israel, particularly the memory regarding the state's establishment. By claiming to have discovered new archival evidence – which in most cases was not new at all – and while ignoring the historical context of the war, this group of Israeli historians turned the saga of Israel's birth upside down so as to prove that Israel was born in a sin of conspiracies, ethnic cleansing, and massacres.

This essay, in focusing on the return of Benny Morris to the fold of mainstream Israeli historians, will review the impact of the New Historians on Middle East studies in academia, on the peace process, and on Israel's general image. Morris in his new incarnation provides the best ammunition in the intellectual struggle against the anti-Zionist historians disguised as revisionist historians, who claim to possess "new" documents that show the "true" history. Ethan Bronner in the *New York Times* explains the role historians play in political debates:

History does not get written or read in a vacuum. The new historians had an agenda – promoting the peace process then beginning. And many Israelis, eager to put an end to their century-old conflict, were willing to be told that their successful nation building had come at a high cost to the Palestinians. They were adjusting their collective narrative to make room for coexistence with onetime enemies.[5]

Academic Impact

The impact of the New Historians who revised and interpreted anew the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be exaggerated. Their amendment of what they termed the “official” Zionist version of history, mixed with postmodernist assumptions (such as that there is no one version of history), was not confined to intellectual debates in academia. Dismissed at the beginning as a fringe phenomenon, this revision of history became within less than a decade the mainstream reading and learning in universities around the world.[6] Benny Morris, who is considered the dean of the New Historians and coined the term, has provided since 1988 the intellectual infrastructure for this revamped history. Morris’s selective use of documents and disregard of Arab hatred, anti-Semitism, and rejectionism toward the idea of a Jewish state have become a goldmine for anti-Zionist literature.[7]

The group also denied what they called the Israeli myth of “the few against the many” regarding the 1948 War, and for some (such as Ilan Pappé) these post-Zionist views were replaced by a self-declared anti-Zionism.[8] In addition to Morris and Pappé, two or three others are considered part of the founding group of the New Historians. Simha Flapan, who was the first (1987) to engage in “demythologizing” the story of Israel’s founding, was included in the list retrospectively after his death. Avi Shlaim emphasized what he viewed as the conspiratorial nature of Israel’s collaboration with Britain and Jordan against the Palestinians.[9] Another writer, Tom Segev, who arrived to this group as a post-Zionist, postmodern journalist, wrote about the Yishuv’s (prestate Israel) attitudes toward the Holocaust and about Israeli society during the 1967 Six Day War, and latter added his own interpretation of the British Mandate in Palestine. In Segev’s book it is hard to find the role of the Jews in British policy calculations in Palestine, and it is the Arabs who drove the British out.[10]

textbooks of Middle East studies syllabuses and reoriented the direction of new research projects and policy ideas on the peace process. The leading opinion-making publications in the United States, the dailies, weeklies, and foreign policy journals, devoted extensive reviews and discussions to what were perceived as groundbreaking works. Typically, even the more objective academics who did not accept all of the New Historians' premises found it necessary to present the conflict in terms of two competing views of history, admitting that "the very concept of objectivity has in recent decades been subjected to relentless attack." [11]

The buzzword in studying the conflict was therefore "narrative," which was supposed to replace the "nonobjective" record of history. Instead of discussing the broad context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is central to the history of each of its particular wars, the popular approach started to isolate it as an Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The new books focused on alleged myths, on distorted collective memories, explaining that both sides were sanctifying hatred and resentment by "building legitimacy through narrative." [12] Narrative – defined by the dictionary as "a story or account of events, experiences or the like, whether true or fictitious" – replaced the search for truth in historical research. Some argue that regardless of validity, a narrative is important because it is part of a collective memory, the belief-set of a group. However, as Morris would realize about two decades later, such fictitious narratives can be very dangerous when they have only one purpose: to deny responsibility for past hatred and to perpetuate it for generations to come.

In Israel, the transformation of history into narratives was reflected in the state-run TV miniseries *Tekuma* (Revival). Broadcast in 1998, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the state, it adopted many of the New Historians' findings. A year later these postmodern theories were given legitimacy by the Ministry of Education itself in its revised high school textbook (*A World of Changes: History for Ninth Grade*), part of a new curriculum aimed at teaching history from an expressly "universal" (as opposed to "nationalist") perspective. [13] This trend even entered the Israel

Replacing the Historical Canon

The basic arguments of the New Historians can be summarized as five challenges to the official Zionist canon of the history of 1948: [15]

- The official version said that Britain tried to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state; the New Historians claimed that it tried to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. Shlaim and Pappé describe in their books a conspiracy between Britain and the Jews at the expense of the Palestinians, and Shlaim extends this to a conspiracy between Zionism and King Abdullah of Transjordan to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. In another stretch of imagination, a Palestinian professor (a former negotiator for the Palestine Liberation Organization) argues that the target of the Arab armies was not the Jews but rather the expulsion of the Arabs in Palestine before taking it over.[16]
- The official version said – so claimed the revisionists – that the Palestinians fled their homes of their own free will;[17] the New Historians said that the refugees were chased out or expelled. Here Morris's contribution was central though he himself was later quoted out of context. This aspect was pivotal for the moral and political campaign to delegitimize Israel.
- The official version said that the balance of power favored the Arabs; the New Historians said that Israel had the advantage both in manpower and in arms, and denied what they regarded as the myth of a heroic liberation war of the few against the many.
- While denigrating and inciting against Israel, the New Historians also came to the rescue of the Arab image and revised or denied the official Israeli claim that the Arabs had a coordinated plan to destroy Israel. The New Historians said that the Arabs were divided or denied their death threats altogether.
- All these four questions lead to the ongoing debate among historians: did the Yishuv in 1947 joyously embrace partition?

Some historians (including Flapan and Shlaim) have claimed that the Arabs wanted peace but the Zionists have been wily in maneuvering Arab leaders (such as al-Husseini, Gamal Abdel Nasser, or Yasser Arafat) into the rejectionist camp.

Impact on the Peace Process

The revisionist historians did not just end up conquering the syllabuses and the instruction in academia; they also took over the arena of Middle East diplomacy and politics. The New Historians had a major impact on the peace process and in shaping the positions taken by the Palestinians, the Israelis, and the Americans. While negotiating for the Oslo agreements in 1992-1993, the then Israeli deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin was reading Morris's book on the Palestinian refugees; later Beilin said the book was a must for Israeli negotiators.[18] Subsequently, during meetings of joint Palestinian-Israeli groups to promote the peace process, the refugee issue became the focal point in attempting to create "agreed mutual perception" of the parties' grievances and to assume responsibility for past wrongdoings.[19]

The revisionists and their guilt-filled narrative loomed over the Israeli negotiators at Camp David hosted by President Bill Clinton in July 2000 and, a few months later, at the Taba talks in the Sinai. The Palestinian negotiators at both forums referred to the work of the New Historians, especially Benny Morris, in trying "to establish Israel's share of responsibility for the plight of the 1948 refugees." [20] Israeli negotiators Beilin and Gilad Sher quoted from Morris's book, and Daniel Levy, Beilin's assistant, has described how important it was for the Israeli team to change the historical narrative so as to reach an agreement with the Palestinians on their "right of return." [21]

Another participant at Camp David was the then Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, himself a historian who admitted that the New Historians had "definitely helped in consolidating the Palestinians' conviction as to the validity of their own narrative" and that the "Israeli peacemakers also came to the negotiating

In sum, the narrative built by the New Historians changed the parameters of political negotiations: a peace agreement was not meant to correct the 1967 “occupation” and create a framework for a territories-for-peace exchange, but to atone for the alleged atrocities of the Nakba (Palestinian catastrophe) of 1948. It became apparent to all that the main obstacle to peace was the problem of the refugees’ “right of return” to all parts of Israel.

Morris’s Retreat

The person who laid the foundation for historical post-Zionism, Benny Morris, is also the one who undermined it in bringing the most serious challenge to its intellectual integrity. Morris still appears unable to say “I was wrong” and express regret for helping build the intellectual basis for the campaign against Israel and Zionism. Instead of exposing his own distortions and fallacies, he says he has found new documents in the Israeli archives that gave him a new perspective on the conflict. Reading his new interpretation of the same events makes it clear how the New Historians – at best – wrote history out of context, completely detached from the reality of its origins. In most cases they engaged in a deliberate falsification and used the “grand lie” technique against Israel.

Then suddenly, about twenty years later, Morris discovered that the Arabs had declared a jihad against Zionism already back in the 1930s. He explains his new approach as stemming from the opening of archives, including the IDF’s archive, which was closed to researchers previously. He also adds that “in the current book [1948] I placed the refugee problem within the overall context of the War of Independence,” and with the help of recent studies, “I tried to present a new and comprehensive description of the war, and primarily of the connections between the military processes and the diplomatic processes.”[23]

[A new description? The exact opposite, in fact. His two most recent books, 1948 and One State, Two States, which were released over the past two years, completely contradict his arguments and the factual basis for his revolutionary historical approach. Morris returns to what was so detested by the New Historians, or as they put it: the canonical version of the official Zionist narrative. His new books demolish all the premises and conclusions of the New Historians. He feels no need to apologize for presenting a sharp indictment of all of post-Zionism, claiming that "historians tended to belittle the importance of the religious rhetoric during the war" and the central role of "religious motivation." This is exactly the omission committed by Morris in his previous books. The dismissal of the threats of jihad was intentional and critical for those who set out to write the "new" narrative and to turn the Nakba into the Palestinian "Holocaust."](#)

The jihad was apparent to all in the existing literature since 1948: threats of annihilation were heard from all Arab sides and even from the dais of the United Nations in 1947 and 1948. As noted, the mufti of Jerusalem, al-Husseini, repeated such threats over and over again; and religious scholars in Cairo issued an official manifesto calling for jihad two days after the partition resolution was passed in November 1947. The translation of the religious decree into military action was the invasion of the Arab armies, which were called the Arab Liberation Army and the Jihad al-Mukades (Holy War) Army.

On the day that Israel declared its independence, Arab League secretary-general Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha declared a holy war. He said, "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." [24] Azzam Pasha, who was the leading spokesperson of all Arab states, had been similarly clear and violent in opposing the partition resolution: "The partition line will be nothing but a line of fire and blood." [25] Al-Husseini stated, "I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!" [26]

Suddenly, and consistently, Morris renounces the post-Zionist narrative in numerous articles, interviews, and lectures, and presents his new position in scholarly books. Indeed, Morris informs his readers that his previous books missed the historical

the start, Morris was little embarrassed, telling *The Guardian* in 2002: "The rumour that I have undergone a brain transplant is (as far as I can remember) unfounded – or at least premature. But my thinking about the current Middle East crisis and its protagonists has in fact radically changed during the past two years."[27]

In his own testimony, Morris explains that a new historical awareness about Arab sources of rage, hatred, and anti-Semitism led him to a new reading of the 1948 war. He is even able to document the intellectual transplant surgery he was undergoing:

My turning point began after 2000. I wasn't a great optimist even before that. True, I always voted Labor or Meretz or Sheli [a dovish party of the late 1970s], and in 1988 I refused to serve in the territories and was jailed for it, but I always doubted the intentions of the Palestinians. The events of Camp David and what followed in their wake turned the doubt into certainty. When the Palestinians rejected the proposal of [Prime Minister Ehud] Barak in July 2000 and the Clinton proposal in December 2000, I understood that they are unwilling to accept the two-state solution. They want it all. Lod and Acre and Jaffa.[28]

Morris goes further in his interview and explains – as was unknown in his previous books and is unheard of in politically correct circles – that there is a "deep problem in Islam." It is a world in which "life doesn't have the same value it does in the West." The Arabs belong to a "tribal culture" in which "revenge" plays a "central part" within a society so lacking in "moral inhibitions" that "if it obtains chemical or biological or atomic weapons, it will use them."

Rewriting the Revisionist History

The complete disregard of historical context can be detected in the tables of contents and in the indexes of the New Historians' books. Arab or Islamic anti-Semitism is nonexistent; if one reads

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The 'New Historians' omissions regarding al-Husseini's role in fomenting hatred against the Jews are part of their great exercise of rewriting history. There were plenty of records on the mufti from the early stages of the conflict under the British Mandate. To evaluate his role as the only recognized leader of the Palestinians until after Israel's establishment, there was no need for new archives to be opened. It is striking that an anti-Israeli Palestinian American such as Rashid Khalidi presents more self-criticism on the destructive role of the two most prominent Palestinian leaders, al-Husseini and Arafat, and also devotes more analysis to Arab anti-Semitism than do the Israeli New Historians.[29] At the same time, Khalidi refers to Morris's early book on the Palestinian refugees as a "groundbreaking" work that "shattered many myths."[30]

Morris "B" (in 2008) reveals how the confluence of Islamic anti-Semitism and jihad played a critical role at the early stages of the conflict in Palestine. It was an integral part of the Arab Revolt in 1936 and it was pursued repeatedly by outsiders such as the speaker of the Iraqi parliament Sa'id al-Haj Thabit when he visited Palestine in March 1936. Morris also notes the mufti's active role in the Nazi jihadist propaganda to the Middle East and in recruiting Bosnian Muslims to the Wehrmacht. The mufti, says Morris, was "deeply anti-Semitic" and justified the Holocaust based on the Jewish character with "their exaggerated conceit and selfishness, rooted in their belief that they are the chosen people of God." [31] Jihad was even part of the diplomatic exchanges sometime before the 1948 War. The Palestinians' main political organ at the time, the Arab Higher Committee, used the term jihad as a formal threat and ultimatum early in 1946 in a letter to British prime minister Clement Attlee.[32]

In the last chapter of *1948*, Morris is detailed and persuasive on the critical role of religious hatred in 1947-1948. He concludes: "The jihadi impulse underscored both popular and governmental responses in the Arab world to the UN partition resolution and was central to the mobilization of the 'street' and the governments for the successive onslaughts [during the war.]... The mosques, mullahs, and 'ulema all played a pivotal role in the

Christian Lebanese, quoted by Morris told the press: "The Jewish State has no chance to survive now that the 'holy war' has been declared. All the Jews will eventually be massacred." [33]

With threats of jihad and extermination coming from all over and with the rejection of the diplomatic track, coupled with the calls to deploy all available military force, the Yishuv could only prepare for the worst-case scenario. As many voices made doomsday warnings, the leaders of the Yishuv had no need to engage in theoretical war games. When the 'ulema of Al-Azhar University proclaimed a "worldwide jihad in defense of Arab Palestine," British foreign minister Ernest Bevin expressed his concern for "the safety of thousands of Jews scattered in the Arab world" and in particular the hundred thousand Jews of Baghdad who were at "risk of having their throats cut." [34]

Jihad was openly declared both in demonstrations in Damascus and in diplomatic circles in the United Nations, where the head of the Egyptian delegation said that "the lives of 1,000,000 Jews in Muslim countries would be jeopardized by the establishment of a Jewish state." [35] In May 1948, U.S. secretary of state (and World War II hero) George C. Marshall warned Israeli foreign-minister-to-be Moshe Sharett against signing Israel's Declaration of Independence: "Believe me; I am talking about things about which I know. You are sitting there in the coastal plains of Palestine, while the Arabs hold the mountain ridges. I know you have some arms and your Haganah, but the Arabs have regular armies. They are well trained and they have heavy arms. How can you hope to hold out?" [36]

A comparison between Morris "A" and Morris "B" shows how the historical context can become blurred and even distorted by using selective facts that are inflated at the expense of the larger and more critical forces of history. It may be true that at the end of the war the newborn IDF emerged better organized, trained, and motivated. Yet during the war itself, as Morris shows in his more recent incarnation, there was a totally different assessment. The majority in the interim Jewish government before statehood as well as the Arabs, British, and Americans all thought the Arabs would defeat the Jewish army in Palestine. It is true that with

current hindsight we can explain how the Arabs failed to organize adequately and how the Palestinian Arabs failed to mobilize their own resources because of “their well established traditions of disunity, corruption, and organizational incompetence.”[37] However, the war context was different: “In rough demographic and geographical terms, without doubt, the Arabs were far, almost infinitely, stronger than the Yishuv...and the disproportion in terms of land mass and economic resources, or potential economic resources, was, if anything, even greater.”[38]

The four armies that invaded Palestine on 15 May, even after leaving behind large formations to protect their regimes, “were far stronger than the Haganah formations”[39] in all kinds of equipment, having far more tanks, artillery, and combat aircrafts (Israel lacked all of these initially). It is natural that at this point, particularly after witnessing the Arab mindset in the systematic destruction of all Jewish settlements by Arab invading armies, the Yishuv’s aim was simply “to survive.”[40] In addition to a clear perception of military inferiority, based on facts and calculations, it was obvious to the Yishuv leaders that the international diplomatic environment was “consistently pro-Arab” and that the British and the Americans were working together on retracting the implementation of the UN vote to establish a Jewish state. [41]

The New Historians’ attempt to prove the British collusion with the Jews against the Arabs is refuted by both the diplomatic and military posture of the Mandatory power. To the contrary, the British were helping in training and in supplying weapons to the Arab Legion of Transjordan, which was the best-trained army in the region, and they worked actively with the Americans to foil the partition in Palestine. Their assessment of the military situation was expressed by the Chief of the Imperial Staff: “In the long run the Jews would not be able to cope...and would be thrown out of Palestine unless they came to terms with [the Arabs].”[42] On 16 May 1948, the British High Commissioner Sir Alan Cunningham determined that the balance of forces “seems to have turned much in favor of the Arabs.”[43] Their representative in Amman, Alec Kirkbride, passed along a message from Azzam Pasha: “It doesn’t matter how many [Jews there are]. We will sweep them into the sea.”[44]

In his most recent book, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict*, Benny Morris casts a dark cloud over the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace. He asserts that the primary reason there is no peace is “the stifling darkness, intolerance, authoritarianism, and insularity of the Muslim world,” a reality that makes any solution a dim prospect.[45]

The problem with Morris is that these factors, as well as those numerous statements on jihad and exterminating the Jews, were in the public domain everywhere in the Middle East, the United Nations, and the Western press and academic publications since 1947-1948. The opening of archives that historians so solemnly flaunt as “new sources” can sometimes add to the knowledge but not necessarily to the historical context and awareness. New documents may provide some previously unavailable details, but in most cases they cannot change the direction of historical research. Worst of all, a selective use of archives that ignores the historical context, ends up in distortions and misleading accounts. It can only serve those like Ilan Pappé, who does not attempt to disguise his anti-Zionist agenda and defines the “new history” as a revolutionary movement whose goal is to “reconsider the validity of the quest for a Jewish nation-state in what used to be geographic Palestine.”[46]

In reply to readers in the *Irish Times*, Morris was unequivocal on the refugee problem:

The displacement of the 700,000 Arabs who became “refugees” – and I put the term in inverted commas, as two-thirds of them were displaced from one part of Palestine to another and not from their country (which is the usual definition of a refugee) – was not a “racist crime”... but the result of a national conflict and a war, with religious overtones, from the Muslim perspective, launched by the Arabs themselves. There was no Zionist “plan” or blanket policy of evicting the Arab population, or of “ethnic cleansing.”

The new Morris blames the Arabs for their misfortunes, denies the existence of a Jewish strategy of expulsion or transfer, and, in effect, defends the right of David Ben-Gurion to expel even more, in light of the threats of jihad. Suddenly, in the concluding chapters in both books, Morris brings the case of the Jews who were expelled from Arab lands, showing that there was an exchange of refugees, with approximately the same figures, as a result of the war. The Arabs who declared the war, says Morris, are also responsible for perpetuating the tragedy of the Palestinians in refugee camps, unlike those Jewish refugees who were absorbed in Israel.

As noted, Morris speaks openly about his failed expectations regarding the Palestinians’ aims in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Probably, in addition to his learning process on the roots of the conflict, he could not ignore the fact that there are virtually no “new historians” on the Arab or the Palestinian side who could inquire into how the religious factor was so detrimental in perpetuating the conflict and how radical Islam was instrumental in inciting against the acceptance of a Jewish state. Hence, he ends his study on 1948 with a clear “J’accuse” against those historians who fail to understand the Arab rejection of the Jewish state and disregard clear facts and statements of religious hatred.

In his more recent books and articles, Morris has become the leading and most effective voice in exposing how the remaining New Historians cling to their unfounded and false messages. Morris’s journey and his radical retreat from his earlier publications constitute an unusual testament to the thin line separating history from propaganda or even falsehood. When the recording of events is motivated by a determination to create a postmodern political narrative, it may end up escaping from history altogether.

* * *

Notes

[2] United Nations Security Council Official Records, S/Agenda/58, 16 April 1948, 19.

[3] "Palestine Frees #3 in Exodus Crew," *New York Times*, 9 September 1947, 2; also Clifton Daniel, "Arabs Threaten Force if Holy Land Is Split," *New York Times*, 7 September 1974, E4.

[4] Morris, 1948, 232.

[5] Ethan Bronner, "The New Historians," *New York Times*, 9 November 2003.

[6] It is easy to discern the New Historians' impact on academia by checking syllabuses in North American and European universities and seeing how prominent were the writings of Morris and the others. On their impact, see Daniel Polisar, "Making History," *Azure*, Spring 5760/2000; on the political implications in the universities, see Manfred Gerstenfeld, *Academics against Israel and the Jews* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Political Affairs, 2007).

[7] Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). This book makes some references to the Arab rejection of a Jewish state but without analysis or an attempt to incorporate it into the historical context. There are also some references to the Arab intention to exploit the Palestinian refugees' tragedy as a political weapon against Israel but they are hinted only in a footnote. The first footnote in chapter 3 mentions Haj Amin al-Husseini's refusal in March 1949 of the refugees returning to their homes. Moreover, Morris's early books lack a discussion or even reference to what is central in his 2008 book on the 1948 war: Arab hatred, Islamic anti-Semitism, the "jihad impulse," and so on.

Israeli historians such as Anita Shapira and Shabtai Teveth attacked Morris, but the most detailed and consistent critique was by Efraim Karsh who very seriously charged Morris with five counts of distortion: "misrepresents documents, resorts to partial quotes, withholds evidence, makes false assertions, and rewrites original documents." See Efraim Karsh, "Benny Morris and the Reign of Error," *Middle East Quarterly* March 1999,

[8] Avi Shlaim speaks of three founders, Morris, Pappé, and himself, but some add others to the group. See Avi Shlaim, "When Historians Matter," *Prospect*, 29 June 2008.

Morris, unlike Pappé who is a self-proclaimed post-Zionist and even anti-Zionist, forcefully resisted any attachment of "post-" to his name or work. He insisted that he was a Zionist and that his work had no political purpose whatsoever.

[9] Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987); Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951* (London: Tauris, 1992), and his anti-Zionist manifesto, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-51* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), and later his *Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 2000).

These Israeli historians were joined by numerous other historians who helped consolidate, on the same fictitious claims, the revisionist, anti-Israeli case and went as far as denying Israel's moral right to exist. For a typical publication, see Michael Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999). The book is described as "exposing the inherent racist and apartheid nature of Zionism" or as "the best demolition job on the moral legitimation of Israel that I have seen." See David McDowall, *Middle East International*, cited in *Living Stones Magazine*, Spring 2000, 3.

[10] Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001). British support for the Jews, according to Segev, stemmed from their mistaken, anti-Semitic belief in the Jews' inordinate global power.

[11] Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Polity, 2008), ix.

introduction. The book assembles different perspectives by Zionists and anti-Zionists and the bias becomes clear, as can be seen in this quotation from a review on the cover: "[The book's] main contribution is to see the tension as historically produced and contingent, revealing the dynamic interplay between narratives of hegemony and resistance," *Human Rights and Human Welfare*. Here narratives are interchangeable with history and the use of the term hegemony has only one meaning in this postmodern vocabulary: the Israeli occupation. See also how veteran scholars of the conflict regard this presentation of narratives as the best way to study the history of the Middle East and the Palestinian struggle; Gordon Fellman, review of Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict*, in *Society* 45 (2008): 204-207.

[13] The most radical of these texts was *A World of Changes: History for Ninth Grade*, edited by Danny Ya'akobi and published by the ministry's own Curriculum Division.

For more on the New Historians and post-Zionism, see Meyrav Wurmser, "Can Israel Survive Post-Zionism?" *Middle East Quarterly*, March 1999,

www.meforum.org/469/can-israel-survive-post-zionism.

[14] It was called *The Struggle for Israel's Security*, and the daily *Yediot Aharonot* described it as "shattering a number of the most splendid myths on which we were raised," 4 August 1999.

[15] This list is based, with this author's additions and clarifications, on two accounts: Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9;

Miron Rapaport, interview with Avi Shlaim, "No Peaceful Solution," *Haaretz*, 11 August 2005, www.editriceilponte.org/_files/HaaretzInterviewEnglish.pdf.

[16] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949-1993* (Oxford and Washington, DC: Clarendon Press/Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1998), 3.

and historians draw attention to instances of expulsion as part and parcel of an eighteen-month war that was fought within cities and villages and in areas controlling the roads to Jewish cities and settlements under siege.

[18] Naomi Alon, interview with Benny Morris, 17 October 2008, <http://cafe.themarker.com/view.php?t=676520>. [Hebrew]

[19] Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, *Creating a Culture of Peace* (Jerusalem: Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, 1999), <http://www.ipcri.org/>.

[20] Shlaim, "When Historians Matter."

[21] Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch, "From Taboo to the Negotiable: The Israeli New Historians and the Changing Representation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2007.

[22] Shlaim, "When Historians Matter." In another instance, a review of Ben-Ami's book in *The Guardian* says that the book

incorporates "revisionist" assumptions that until recently most Israelis flatly rejected: that contrary to the old David versus Goliath image, the balance of forces and of motivation in the 1948 war favored them; that the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967 was anything but liberal; that Israeli attitudes have always been as important a part of this sorry story as Arab intransigence.

See Ian Black, "Not David but Samson," review of Shomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy*, in *The Guardian*, 11 February 2006.

[23] Benny Morris, "BeChazara LeTashach" (Returning to 1948), *Haaretz* literary magazine, 16 September 2009. [Hebrew]

[24] Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 333.

[25] Ahron Bregman and Jihan El-Tahri, *Israel and the Arabs* (New York: TV Books, 1998), 28.



[28] Ari Shavit, interview with Benny Morris, "Survival of the Fittest?" *Haaretz*, 16 January 2004.

[29] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006). See the references in the index to anti-Semitism and to al-Husseini, where Khalidi explains why he failed as a leader and was discredited because of his alliance with the Nazis (62, 114, 127). See also Khalidi's criticism of Arafat (158-164).

[30] *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

[31] Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, 16, 21. The omissions by the New Historians on the mufti's role in fomenting hatred against the Jews are part of their endeavor of rewriting history. There are endless records on the mufti from the early stages of the conflict under the British Mandate. There was no need for new archives to be opened to write accurately about him. Much has long been written on him as the symbol of Arab anti-Semitic obstruction of peace. Two more recent books substantiate the previous knowledge with the use of new documents: David G. Dalin and John F. Rothmann, *Icon of Evil: Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam* (New York: Random House, 2008); Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[32] Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, 34.

[33] *Ibid.*, 395.

[34] *Ibid.*, 65.

[35] *Ibid.*, 70.

[36] Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* (New York: Pan Books, 1972), 315. This source, a leading bestseller, is just one illustration among many others that Morris did not have to wait for the twenty-first century's opening of archives to grasp

[37] Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, 399.

[38] Ibid., 398.

[39] Ibid., 401.

[40] Ibid., 397.

[41] Ibid., 403. Again, all these facts of history were well recorded in numerous sources right after 1948. See the sources on the British and American anti-Israeli diplomacy at the United Nations in Avi Beker, *The United Nations and Israel: From Recognition to Reprehension* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), ch. 3. A more recent book highlights the consistent efforts by the British and the U.S. State Department to obstruct and retract the partition resolution at the United Nations in early 1948; Allis Radosh and Roland Radosh, *A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), ch. 10.

[42] Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, 81.

[43] Ibid., 112.

[44] Ibid., 187.

[45] Benny Morris, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[46] Ilan Pappé, "Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians, Part II: The Media," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, 3 (1997): 37-43.

[47] Benny Morris, letter to the *Irish Times*, 21 February 2008, http://zionism-israel.com/israel_news/2008/02/israel-and-palestinians-according-to.html.

* * *

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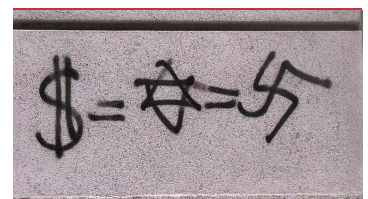


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